

POST SHORTS

Recycling schedule



The recycling pickup for Wednesday, Dec. 29, is paper. Put items in paper bags, boxes or bundles and place them on the curb.

Holiday refuse removal schedule

For the week of Christmas, Friday's Dec. 24 removals are moved to Thursday, Dec. 23.

For the week of New Year's, Tuesday's Dec. 28 removals are moved to Monday, Dec. 27, Thursday's Dec. 30 removals are moved to Tuesday, Dec. 28, and Friday's Dec. 31 removals are moved to Thursday, Dec. 30.

There will be no trash pickup on Dec. 24 or Dec. 31.

The only scheduled pickup for Christmas trees is Monday, Jan. 10.

Holiday gate operations

The Harford Gate, or Route 22, in the Aberdeen Area, will close at 10 p.m., Dec. 23 and reopen 4 a.m., Dec. 27. The Wise Road Gate, or Edgewood Road in the Edgewood Area, will close at 8 p.m. and reopen 4 a.m., Dec. 27.

The Harford Gate, or Route 22, in the Aberdeen Area, will close at 10 p.m., Dec. 30 and reopen 4 a.m., Jan. 3. The Wise Road Gate, or Edgewood Road in the Edgewood Area, will close at 8 p.m., Dec. 30 and reopen 4 a.m., Jan. 3.

Holiday closures

Kirk U.S. Army Health Clinic will be closed in observance of the federal holidays Dec. 24 and 31. There will be no Saturday Walk-in Clinic on Dec. 25 or Jan. 1.

Training holidays will be observed on Dec. 27 and Jan. 3, with minimal staffing.

Any TRICARE issues can be addressed by calling 1-877-874-2273.

The *Dental Clinic* will be closed Dec. 24 and 31.

The *Dental Clinic Shuttle* will not operate through Jan. 3 due to Student Exodus. The APG Shuttle is available during this time if Soldiers have appointments.

Top of the Bay will be closed through Jan. 3.

The *Dental Clinic Shuttle* will resume normal operation on Jan. 4.

The *Edgewood Chemical Stockpile Outreach Office* will be closed Dec. 24, 27 and Jan. 3, and will close 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 28.

See SHORTS, page 5

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Page 2

Lt. Gen. Byrnes observes Warrior training

Page 3

DTC recreates 'Front-Line' holiday tree

Page 6

MWR

Page 8

ChalleNGe Academy graduates 98

Page 11

Holiday scenes on APG

Soldiers depart APG on Exodus leave



Photo by BLAKE VOSHELL

Volunteers from Maryland Veterans of Foreign Wars ladies auxiliaries greet Soldiers from the U.S. Army Ordnance Center and Schools as they arrive at the United Service Organization's International Gateway Lounge at Baltimore-Washington International Airport on the way to their Exodus holiday leave Dec. 17. See full story, OC&S and USO unite for Soldier sendoff, page 12.

Chapel gives gift to ACS

USAGAPG

A check for \$5,167.41 was presented to Celestine Beckett, director of Army Community Service Dec. 10 by Chaplain (Col.) William D. Willett to help Soldiers in need. The money was collected through a weekend of designated offerings at each of the chapel services on post.

"This is the best kind of help we can give, help that stays in our community," said Chaplain (Maj.) Jeffrey Watters, the Chapel resource manager. "And this is the most we've ever given here at APG."

For many Soldiers, the holidays are a difficult time.

Being away from home or having difficulty financially make the time more taxing for some people. Worse yet is a combination of these factors.

The chapel congregations often help local agencies through the designated offering program, and ACS is no exception.

Army Community Service is able to provide help for many Soldiers in need through many of their programs. Over the holidays, they are able to provide food assistance for Soldiers. The outreach program is a very beneficial part of the mission of ACS and many families benefit from the services. The funding for these

outreach services comes mainly through donations to ACS.

It is through this donation process that the Chapel community at APG was able to team with ACS to provide help for Soldiers and their families.

Sarah Staats of ACS commented that it is "amazing how much people care for others here." She said that she had seen help like this at other posts and it was even better here to be part of the helping process. Observing the ceremony, Spc. Chad Emrick said, "This is great; so many of my fellow Soldiers will be able to enjoy much more of a holiday because of the generosity of the chapel congregations."

If you catch a buzz, catch a ride

DLES

This holiday season, the Directorate of Law Enforcement and Security is reminding everyone that if, "You Drink & Drive, You Lose."

"Impaired driving is one of America's deadliest crimes," said Michael Farlow, Aberdeen Proving Ground community policing officer. "That's why we are reminding everyone this holiday season, if you catch a buzz, catch a ride."

Nationally, more than 17,000 people died in alcohol-related highway crashes during 2003

and that every 30 minutes, nearly 50 times a day, someone dies in an alcohol-related crash, Farlow said.

Hundreds of thousands more are injured each year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and about three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

"That's why the APG Police are joining with other national, state and local highway safety and law enforcement officials to remind

See SOBER DRIVING, page 4

ABC-C cautions employees about bogus contacts

ABC-C

Employees should always be cautious before disclosing any personal information to an unfamiliar source concerning their federal benefits.

Numerous Army employees have received phone calls from an individual claiming to be a contractor with the Army Benefits Center-Civilian, or ABC-C. The caller reportedly is asking a series of personal questions for the purpose of "preparing an annuity estimate."

The ABC-C does not employ contractors and is not contacting employees for this reason.

Employees are reminded that the ABC-C is the primary source within the Department of the Army for providing information and counseling on Federal Employee Health Benefits, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance, Thrift Savings Plan and Civil Service Retirement System/Federal Employee Retirement System Benefits for current Army employees.

The ABC-C will occasionally need to contact an employee on a specific benefit issue without prior contact from the employee for the purpose of resolving health plan discrepancies, etc. The ABC-C will only make such calls during the normal business hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Central Time. Local Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers may also have the need to contact employees to further coordinate the benefits specified above.

If an employee feels uncomfortable, he or she can always place a direct call to verify the source. For instance, for the ABC-C, the employee can call the ABC-C toll free number, 1-877-276-9287, and ask to speak with the counselor who is calling.

Military Exchange phone card rates drop for holidays

AAFES

Deployed military personnel, much like their civilian counterparts in the states, will be heating up the phone lines through the first of the year to connect with family and friends during the holidays. Because of the anticipated increase in telephone usage, the Army & Air Force Exchange Service has worked with AT&T to secure a reduced rate for troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As a result of these negotiations, troops in Afghanistan and Iraq who use the AAFES' 550-Unit Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone card to Jan. 5 will enjoy rates as low as .19 cents per minute.

"It is only through per-

sistence and tough negotiation that AAFES can provide a better rate from Iraq and Afghanistan for the holidays," said AAFES' Commander Maj. Gen. Kathryn Frost. "Phone calls home provide an instant morale boost to troops. AAFES must negotiate the absolute lowest possible telecommunication rates between the front lines and the home front."

The decreased rate is also good news for anyone who would like to send a phone card to deployed troops. The reduced rate means that a \$39 phone card purchased through the "Help Our Troops Call Home" program will provide 46 additional minutes of talk time for

See PHONE CARD, page 4

NECPOC eyes Soldiers with 2nd annual show

Story and photo by
Yvonne Johnson
APG News

The Northeast Civilian Personnel Operations Center saluted the military and the holiday season with its second annual "Keep Your Eye on the Soldier Program" at the Aberdeen Area Recreation Center Dec. 14.

The show featured NECPOC branches, divisions and front office personnel and Soldiers from the U.S. Army Ordnance Center and Schools in a series of patriotic skits.

Debbie Jennings and Leslie Lovick, the NECPOC branch chiefs who emceed the program, wore costumes in keeping with the show's theme. Jennings wore a flag dress with dozens of "eye" buttons sewn onto it to illustrate the show's title, and Lovick dressed as an oak tree with a yellow ribbon tied around its center.

"This program was born out of a desire to remember those

who have sacrificed so much that we may enjoy the freedoms that we have," Jennings said.

"Each presentation was

designed by the models [performers] and their teams to help us think about Soldiers in serious times and also in light-

See NECPOC, page 4



From left, Allison Beltz, Linda Smith and Joyce Booth, employees with the Northeast Civilian Personnel Operations Center, perform the song, "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" during the organization's second annual "Keep Your Eye on the Soldier" program at the Aberdeen Area Recreation Center Dec. 14.

Warrior Training conducted at APG



E. C. Starnes
U.S. Army Ordnance Corps

The two high-mobility multi purpose wheeled vehicles, or humvees, moved slowly along the warehouses, the Soldiers on board alertly watching the buildings and the nearby wooded area.

Suddenly there is the sound of a rocket being fired and a flash explosion as the rocket skids under the body of the lead humvee. It's an ambush from the field just beyond the tree line and the troops react.

As the first vehicle comes to a halt and the Soldiers move into a defensive posture, covering the site of the ambush, gunfire erupts as several "enemy" personnel engage the vehicles.

The second vehicle moves toward the enemy and halts. The Soldiers take shelter behind the vehicle and return fire.

Three pop-up targets are downed. The enemy is killed or driven off. There are no apparent casualties.

Photos by LA'MONT HARBISON
Staff Sgt. Juanito Ernacio searches a room as Training and Doctrine Command Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Williams and Ordnance Corps Regimental Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Aubain observe. The exercise is part of the increased warrior training introduced into the Ordnance Mechanical Maintenance School's Noncommissioned Officer Academy.



Sgts. 1st Class Clifton Smith, left, and Jerrey McCarrol, Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course Small Group Leaders, attack a convoy with a simulated rocket propelled grenade during warrior training at the Ordnance Mechanical Maintenance School Noncommissioned Officer Academy.



Sgt. 1st Class Tamera Doliber, an Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course student, fires around a barrier as Staff Sgt. Robert Walker, a Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course small group leader, and Gen. Kevin Byrnes, commanding general, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, look on.

throughout the world were preparing to go to war, returning from war or doing those things necessary to get ready to return to war.

This varied audience was reflected in the NCO students the two generals met as they toured the academy training area. Soldiers participating in the training included veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Soldiers preparing to face the enemy for the first time.

One veteran NCO student told the visitors that the training was "very relevant."

Byrnes told his AUSA audience, "In the IET base, we've identified the need given the war; we've identified the need for 40 individual tasks and nine collective tasks every Soldier must be able to perform before they graduate from AIT [advanced individual training]."

He told the students at the NCOA that what and how we train has to change.

"When we were fighting the Soviets, we knew how to fight," Byrnes stated, "because it centered on the military, not politics in Moscow.

"These guys," he continued, "we need to know their culture, the way they think."

He went on to say that he wants to push this thinking into officer training and down to the NCO and enlisted training.

At the U.S. Army Ordnance Center and Schools, Aubain headed a task force to ensure that Warrior Training was embedded in professional development training for the Ordnance Corps' noncommissioned officers.

Aubain noted, "As we move forward, we understand we are an Army at war and change must be relevant and has to come rapidly."

With that in mind, the NCO Academy has not only revamped its BNCOC training to include 13.5 more hours, the Field Training Exercise was redesigned and made more relevant to training warriors.

"We need to get rid of the rear area mentality," Aubain said.

The FTX has become a 24-hour-a-day operation lasting five days.

"In addition to the Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills," Aubain said, "we have incorporated Ranger Combative Training."

The training is conducted in both the Aberdeen and Edgewood areas of APG. Specialized equipment, such as the laser marksmanship training system and the laser convoy counter ambush training system are incorporated to offer more realistic training.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Edith Crofts, commandant of the NCO Academy, more focus has also been given to training such as battle damage assessment and repair BDAR kits, crew served weapons and convoy operations.

"As each class concludes their training, they conduct an AAR (after action review) with their small group leaders," Crofts said. "Many of these students have recently returned from deployment. They tell us what they saw in their units, and we try to incorporate their feedback into the lessons.

"Knowledge of crew served weapons, quick aim fire and clearing a building/room are a few of the changes made from the time we started this training," she continued. "I talked to each

See WARRIOR, page 4



Two advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course students take cover behind their vehicle following an attack during convoy operations training at the Ordnance Mechanical Maintenance School Noncommissioned Officer Academy.



Staff Sgt. Tracy Miller, a Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course small group leader, subdues Sgt. 1st Class Brian Sarjeant, combatives instructor.

APG News

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Staff

APG Commander Brig. Gen. Roger A. Nadeau
Public Affairs Officer George P. Mercer
Editor Debi Horne
Editorial Assistant Marguerite Towson
Contract Photojournalists Yvonne Johnson
..... Meghan Bowen
Graphic Designer/Web Designer Blake Voshell
Web site www.apgnews.apg.army.mil

DTC celebrates holidays with 'Front-Line Christmas Tree'

Mike Cast
DTC Public Affairs

The Christmas season evokes visions of a beautifully decorated tree surrounded by gifts and all the trappings of a festive occasion - a crackling fire, Christmas cards on the mantle and visiting relatives who have come a long way to spend the holidays with their loved ones. But Soldiers have had to celebrate Christmas under far different circumstances - far away from loved ones, in damp, cold fox-holes, unable to find a tree or traditional ornaments.

The resourcefulness of American Soldiers solved that dilemma, however, because they fashioned front-line "trees" out of military hardware and decorated them with military gear.

APG's Developmental Test Command created a front-line Christmas tree of its own this season, to help DTC Soldiers and employees remember that American Soldiers are spending Christmas in harm's way and in places far from home.

The idea for the front-line tree began with a DTC Christmas-tree-decorating contest. During a meeting within DTC's Directorate for Plans and Operations, Lou Brown, a DTC employee who is a history buff and well-versed in military history, suggested the directorate compete in the contest with a "tree" resembling the type Soldiers have erected on battlefields since World War I.

"The first World War set the precedent for the front-line tree," Brown said. Wood was scarce, and Soldiers had to use whatever they could find to substitute for a tree and its decorations, he added. So they used items available on the battlefield - perhaps a camouflage net draped over a pole for the tree, which was then decorated with canteens, cooking utensils, ration cans, pistol holsters and other nearby military gear. Soldiers have continued that tradition since then, whenever they couldn't have a real tree, Brown said.

DTC's "tree" consists of camouflage netting draped over a flagstaff to make it look as much as possible like a real Christmas tree. Its variety of military ornaments - everything from Meals-Ready-To-Eat wrappers to a grenade with

the explosive removed - came from people within the directorate and elsewhere in DTC headquarters.

Fashioning and decorating the tree was a group effort. Judith Wettig, another DTC employee, went to the U.S. Army Aberdeen Test Center and got people there to donate or lend military items to decorate the tree. DTC's Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Robinson gave his advice on the types of military ornaments that would typically go on a front-line tree and donated an MRE. Sgt. Joyce Stewart-Chappell, who works for Robinson, provided the flagstaff and stand to support the "tree," and DTC's Sgt. Michael Crewes came up with the idea of adding break-open chemical lights to the ornamentation. White chemical lights graced the tree at the time this article was written, but plans are in the works to add red ones.

When it came time to set up the "tree," DTC's Nancy Sheets, Judith Wettig, Carol Stewart, T.R. Masino and Frank Bartosik pitched in, as did Marlene Townsend, an ATC employee on a 120-day developmental assignment at DTC. Townsend is working at DTC in the place of John McFassel, a DTC employee who deployed to Iraq with a National Guard facilities engineering unit. Sheets said

Townsend and Wettig worked with ATC's Warfighter Core to find items that had been tested and fielded to troops and ornaments that added a special meaning to the front-line tree.

"A really big thanks go to them because we wouldn't have been able to pull this off without them," Sheets said.



Photo by MIKE CAST

The Developmental Test Command's "Front-Line Tree" is the type of Christmas tree Soldiers erect when they don't have firs or spruce or conventional ornaments but plenty of imagination.

General Physics continues tradition of giving

Yvonne Johnson
APG News

For the second year in a row, the General Physics Corporation spread holiday cheer through the 16th Ordnance Battalion with donated toys, turkeys and Christmas stockings for the unit's families.

Scotty Hager, General Physics director of homeland security, presented the gifts to Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Richard B. Parker at the battalion headquarters Dec. 15.

On hand to accept the donations were Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander Capt. Teressa Lynn and 1st Sgt. Neil Washington.

"We definitely appreciate that we have civilian agencies out there that recognize that although we stand and fight for democracy and freedom throughout the world, we still have those who need to be taken care of in our own families here," Parker said.

He presented Hager with commander's coins of excellence.

"This is a small token of our appreciation for acknowledging that others need help and assistance," he said.

An Army veteran, Hager said that he couldn't recall anyone reaching out a helping hand when he was raising a young family.

"We all understand the sacrifices that you make and we appreciate it," Hager said.

Lynn and Washington added their thanks to Hager and the General Physics staff.

"I would just like to thank General Physics for coming out in supporting our troops and supporting those who really need you this year," Lynn said. "Thanks again and we hope to see you again next year."

"This is the second year we have done this project from

General Physics, which we greatly appreciate and which the Soldiers appreciate," Washington added.

He added his thanks Sgt. 1st Class Dale Wood, Dave Milton of General Physics, and the unit Soldiers who helped with the project.

"Believe me, those families really appreciate your support," he said.

"We want to thank you all for coming out here to do this."

Local companies donated

the items and General Physics staff members did the shopping and gift-wrapping.

General Physics operates the U.S. Army's Chemical Demilitarization Training Facility in the Edgewood Area.

The company supports Aberdeen Proving Ground through contracts with the Directorate of Safety, Health and Environment and the Chemical Materiel Agency's Chemical Agent Disposal Program.



Photo by MEGHAN BOWEN

Toys and Christmas stockings donated by employees of General Physics Corporation are piled high in the 16th Ordnance Battalion Day Room Dec. 16, awaiting distribution to one of six Soldiers' families.

MRICD scientists receive R&D achievement award

Four individuals from the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense received a 2003 Army Research and Development Achievement award for the development of a second-generation barrier skin cream, known as Active Topical Skin Protectant.

The RDA awards were presented to Dr. Ernest H. Braue Jr., Dr. John S. Graham, Bryce F. Doxzon and Horace L. Lumpkin at the 24th Army Science Conference, held Nov.

29 to Dec. 2 in Orlando.

"This award is representative of the outstanding scientists and the overall research efforts that are produced at the Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense," said MRICD's Commander Col. Gennady E. Platoff. "I know I speak for the Medical Research and Materiel Command in congratulating these individuals for this most outstanding contribution and award."

The successful completion of the aTSP research effort

moves this product towards advanced development with the ultimate goal of providing U.S. warfighters and civilians with complete protection against chemical warfare agents.

The aTSP dramatically improves the protection provided by the first generation product, SERPACWA (Skin Exposure Reduction Paste Against Chemical Warfare Agents), fielded in 2003, by neutralizing the chemical agents into less toxic products

as they try to pass through the barrier coating.

The concept for further improvement of the aTSP is to develop a reactive matrix that will neutralize and decontaminate chemical warfare agents on contact when applied before or after exposure to these toxic chemicals.

"Our research group has spent the last 15 years working on developing barrier skin creams that will protect our warfighters and civilians from the harmful effects of chemi-

cal warfare agents," said Braue, the research coordinator for the development of the barrier creams. "It is extremely gratifying to know that we have given our service members, who are now in harm's way, a product that has the potential to save their lives."

Braue and his team identified over 150 active moieties and tested these in 500 formulations. The optimum formulations display excellent resistance against nerve agents and blister agents. This research

program produced 14 peer-reviewed journal articles, 20 government reports, and 10 patents.

Acknowledging the contribution and support of the institute and its staff, Graham said, "Military and civilian employees at the MRICD are dedicated to finding protective measures and treatments to combat the detrimental effects of these agents.

"It has been my privilege to work for this esteemed research institute," he added.

NECPOC

From front page

hearted ways," Lovick added.

The show featured music, videos and elaborate costume designs. It began with a memorial tribute to fallen Soldiers, featuring OC&S drill sergeants, the playing of "Taps," and a video tribute to our Soldiers around the world, which included four Soldiers stationed in Iraq who have been adopted by Branch F.

"This branch chose to keep

their eye on the Soldier by collecting and sending goodies to these young men who are so far from home," Lovick said.

The show's skits included "Lets Get This Party Started" by Branch B and a salute to the Statue of Liberty by Branch I. Branch H highlighted "The Life of a Request for Personnel Action," while the Management Support Office saluted the Rosie the Riveter era that drew women out of the kitchen and into the workplace during World War II.

In a "Tribute to the USO,"

the NECPOC front office staff saluted the contributions of the USO and highlighted the Andrews Sisters' songs, "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree" and "Here Comes Santa Claus."

Other skits included "Tools of the Trade" by Branch C; "Communication with a Bang" by Branch A; a Branch E tribute to the long-running television series, "M.A.S.H."; a March of the Tents by the Information Services Division; the song, "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," performed by members of Branch D; and the Central Resume Processing Center welcome home, which depicted the safe return of American troops from overseas.

Lee McGlothlin, NECPOC director, thanked the show's participants after a standing ovation from the audience.

"I don't know about you but I thought that [the show] was really great," McGlothlin said. "My thanks to all who had a hand in its production."



Photos by YVONNE JOHNSON

Military 'spouses,' right, wave flags while celebrating the safe return of American 'troops' from overseas, during the Northeast Civilian Personnel Operations Center's "Keep Your Eye on the Soldier" program at the Aberdeen Area Recreation Center Dec. 14.



From left, Mary Pettitway as a radio, Pam Sanft as a cannon, and Donna Harris as a satellite, highlight the NECPOC Branch A mission of communications and electronic equipment repair and the manufacturing and production of weaponry and equipment.

Warrior

From page 2

ANCOC class since we implemented the new [program of instruction] and every class told me they wish they had this training before they deployed. They all agree that it is valuable, worthwhile training. And, all are eager to return to their units to train their Soldiers."

Another training addition for some of the Soldiers is discussion time with Sgt.

James Riley, who is a former POW and a survivor of the attack on the 507th Maintenance Company in the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is now an instructor at the OMMS.

"The students are very interested in what he has to say and what he experienced," Crofts said.

Byrnes has noted that this new training focus has been implemented to put Warrior Ethos into the schoolhouse.

Warrior Ethos means, basically, that every Soldier is a Soldier first; that a

Soldier will never quit; mission will always come first; Soldier's refuse to accept defeat; and Soldiers will never leave an American behind.

"It's about being a Soldier," Byrnes has stressed to many audiences. "We're not cooks, we're not mechanics, we're not electricians, we are Soldiers and we have skills that apply to these different areas."

Aubain quotes Proverbs 27:17 to explain the training-"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Sober driving

From front page

everyone this holiday season to always designate a sober driver before each holiday party or event involving alcohol," Farlow said.

"The holiday season is supposed to be a time for family, friends, and festive cel-

ebrations, but it is unfortunately also a time when we see a tragic jump in the number of alcohol-related highway fatalities each year."

"Designating a sober driver before the party begins is just one of several, simple steps to remember to help avoid a tragic crash or an arrest for impaired driving," he said. The DLES offers the following reminders for a safer holiday season:

- Don't even think about getting behind the wheel of a vehicle after drinking.
- If impaired, call a taxi, use mass transit, or call a sober friend or family member for a ride.
- Stay put and sleep it off.
- And remember, friends don't let friends drive drunk. Take the keys and never allow a friend to drive while impaired.

Phone card

From front page

troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The reduced rate will provide over three hours of calls between Iraq or Afghanistan and the Continental United States," Frost said.

To date, AAFES' "Help Our Troops Call Home" program has generated \$576,082 to help Marines, Sailors, Airmen and Soldiers stay in touch with loved ones back home. These funds have been used to pur-

chase 13,998 550-Unit Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone cards and 1,508 Ship to Shore cards. The "Help Our Troops Call Home" initiative offers phone cards that do not expire and do not add any additional charges or connection fees.

The 550-Unit Military Exchange Global Prepaid Phone Cards and Ship to Shore cards can be sent to individual service members or "any service member" through the American Red Cross, USO,

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Air Force Aid Society or the Fisher House Foundation. AAFES' charitable partners have distributed 3,420 phone cards since the "Help Our Troops Call Home" program began in April 2004.

Sixty-one AAFES call centers throughout Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom have been critical in keeping deployed troops and their families in touch. The Military Exchange 550-Unit Prepaid Phone card offers the best

value for troops who enjoy calls home from any of AAFES' 47 call centers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The "Help Our Troops Call Home" initiative allows any American to make a direct contribution to the morale of troops who find themselves far from home. Individuals, organizations and businesses can log on to www.aafes.com and click the "Help Our Troops Call Home" link or call 1-800-527-2345.

Post Shorts

31. Normal hours of operation for the Outreach Office are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 410-676-6800.

The *Thrift Shop* will be closed through Jan. 5.

Donna's Pit Beef will be closed through Dec. 31 and reopen Jan 3.

Donna's now serves hot breakfast sandwiches including egg and cheese; ham, egg and cheese; and beef, egg and cheese, 6 to 10:30 a.m.

For more information, call 410-272-7730.

TRICARE conducts briefings

Kirk U.S. Army Health Clinic will hold TRICARE briefings in their Readiness and Training Conference Room, building 2501, 8 a.m. and noon, Dec. 22. The briefings will be conducted by HealthNet Federal Services

Ragdoll cat found

The APG Veterinary Clinic is trying to locate a woman that stopped by the clinic looking for her lost cat. She did not leave her name.

The "ragdoll" cat has been located. The woman is asked to call or visit the clinic, 410-278-3911.

APG tax program volunteers needed

The Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, Legal Assistance Office, will operate a Tax Assistance Program to assist and prepare 2004 income tax returns for Soldiers, retirees and eligible family members.

The Legal Assistance Office seeks volunteers to assist either in tax preparation or administration. Volunteers interested in participating must be willing to donate several hours per week during the tax period, Jan. 24 through April 15, 2005.

Volunteers who wish to prepare tax returns will attend a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance seminar to be held at the Tax Center located in building 310, wing 9, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Jan 3 through 14, 2005.

For more information, call the Legal Assistance Office at 410-278-1583/1584.

Volunteer today to help out Soldiers and their family members.

Military Christian Center plans seven trips for December

The Military Christian Center has sightseeing and shopping trips scheduled for December. Pickup times and locations include:

Dec. 23, 7 p.m. pickup, Christmas Party - Noel Company.

All trips are free, with a donation of \$2.

The Military Christian Center is located at 16 N. Philadelphia Blvd., Aberdeen, and is open Friday through Sunday.

Free home-cooked meals and dorm facilities are available.

When a call is received, a member of the staff will pick up. The center is a practical place to hang out and relax for the weekend.

For more information, call 410-272-1144 after 8 p.m. Friday evening, or e-mail Winningapg@aol.com.

KWVA membership criteria

The following is in addition to the information on the Maryland Chapter, Korean War Veterans Association that appeared in the Dec. 2 issue of the *APG News*.

Robert Banker submitted this information.

The criteria for the qualifying period for membership in the KWVA is as follows:

Membership is open to any person who has seen honorable service in any of the armed forces of the United States, said service being within Korea Sept. 3, 1945 to June 25, 1950, within and without Korea, June 25, 1950 to Jan. 31, 1955, or to any member of the armed forces who served honorable in Korea from Feb. 1, 1955.

The Maryland Chapter meets at 7 p.m. at 2601 Beckley Street, Fort Holabird, Md., on the third Wednesday of each month.

For more information, call Earl House at 410-665-9959.

Computer security tips begin this week

Starting this week, the Directorate of Information Management will begin publishing bi-weekly articles and tips on computer security and related matters.

This week's tip is, "Do not open Christmas cards that come as attachments. The DOIM has received reports of Christmas cards containing computer viruses.

For more information, call Mike Mays, 410-278-2106

Visit the land of tulips, windmills, wooden shoes

The Civilian Welfare Fund is sponsoring a trip to Holland, April 19 through 26.

The price per person is \$2,449 for a single, \$2,149 based on double-occupancy, and \$2,099 based on triple-occupancy and includes roundtrip airfare, hotel accommodations, six buffet breakfasts, four three-course din-

CWF events, trips for 2005

Jan. 15

Jan. 28

Feb. 26

March 4 thru 6

March 18

March 25

April 1

April 19 thru 26

May 14

June 3

June 24 thru 26

July 15

July 23

Aug. 8 thru 22

Sept. 9

Sept. 17

Oct. 28

Nov. 25 thru 27

Scrapbook Crop at Top of the Bay

70's Party at Top of the Bay

APG Mardi Gras Ball at Top of the Bay

Ski Trip to the Poconos

Celtic Feast at Top of the Bay

"Behold the Lamb," at Sight and Sound and dinner at Willow Valley dinner theater

Trip to Holland

New York for the Day

Caribbean Party at Top of the Bay

Weekend in Cape May

Medieval times at Top of the Bay

Broadway show "Wicked," in New York City

Alaskan Cruise and Land Tour, including the Arctic Circle

Wine and Cheese Tasting with an evening of jazz, the Fiore Winery

Broadway show in New York City

Murder Mystery Dinner, Top of the Bay

Weekend in New York City, Radio City Music Hall Christmas

Spectacular - optional one-day visit or weekend stay

ners, a welcome dinner, air transfers and tours.

Tours include a canal-cruise in Amsterdam; a diamond polishing demonstration; a visit to Rembrandt's masterpieces, the flower auction in Aalsmeer, a windmill, a wooden shoe factory and cheese factory in Zaanse Schans; stops in Sloten, Staphorst and the Royal Palace in Het Loo, the Netherlands Open Air Museum; a trip to the pewter factory in Tiel; a visit to Waterland in Zeeland; ascend the Euromast Tower in Rotterdam; a stop in Scheveningen; a visit to the Peace Palace in the Hague; and a visit to the Flower Park in Keukenhof and more.

A \$200 per person non-refundable deposit is due upon reservation.

For more information or to reserve a seat, call Angela Keithley or Jacqueline McKeever at 410-278-4603/4771.

Elective Deferral Limits set for 2005, 2006

For 2005, the annual limit on elective deferrals will be \$14,000. The annual limit for 2006 will be \$15,000.

After 2006, the increase will be indexed to the annual cost of living adjustment referred to in the Tax Code.

For purposes of the Thrift Savings Plan, the term "elective deferrals" refers to employee contributions, which are made on a tax-deferred basis.

Federal Employee Retirement System employees may be affected by the elective deferral limit. For 2005, any FERS employee whose annual basic pay exceeds \$93,333 will be affected.

The latest version of the Fact Sheet "Annual Limit on

Elective Deferrals" is available on the TSP Web site, www.tsp.gov.

For more information, contact a servicing human resources assistant.

Military Marriage Seminar offered

The APG Chapel will host a Military Marriage Seminar Jan. 28 and 29. The seminar can rekindle that "just married" feeling. Couples who care enough about their marriage to make it better should attend the Military Marriage Seminar at the Aberdeen Area Post chapel. Space is limited. Call 410-278-4333 or stop by the chapel and complete a registration form. Cost is \$30 per couple. The seminar is open to anyone.

Redskins help raise funds for USO

Fans can show their support for the Washington Redskins and help raise funds for the USO of Metropolitan Washington by purchasing the official Redskins "Support our Troops" hat, available at all 12 Washington Redskins official store locations and online at www.redskins.com.

The "Support our Troops" hat features a Redskins logo on the front and a yellow ribbon on the side with the words "support our troops."

Twenty-Five percent of all proceeds from the sale of the hat will benefit the family assistance programs of the USO of Metropolitan Washington. To join the America Supports You team and find out how you can get involved, log onto www.AmericaSupportsYou.mil.

All day Scrapbook Crop

Seasoned scrapbookers or for those who always wanted

to try scrapbooking, are invited to "Crop Till You Drop" at Top of the Bay, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Jan. 15. Full day and partial day sessions are available.

Lunch and dinner will be served, door prizes will be available and everyone will receive a goodie bag.

Vendors will have items for sale for all scrapbooking needs, optional classes will be offered and a massage therapist will be available for an optional massage for a stress-free day, with plenty of pampering.

The cost for a full day and evening of cropping 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., is \$35 per person; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. costs \$20 per person; and 5 to 10 p.m. costs \$20 a person.

For more information, call Angela Keithley or Jacqueline

McKeever, 410-278-4771/4603.

TSP Open Season update

Due to the legal holiday on Dec. 31, the Thrift Savings Plan Open Season will be extended through close of business Jan. 3.

TSP Open Season transactions can be created either through the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) by accessing the ABC-C homepage, <https://www.abc.army.mil/>, or through the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) by dialing 1-877-276-9287. Benefit counselors are available Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. CT (excluding federal holidays).

Movies

The Movie Theater will be closed through Jan. 7, 2005.

Religious service Christmas schedule

Catholic services

Friday, Dec. 24

5 p.m., Christmas Pageant and Mass, EA

Saturday, Dec. 25

10 a.m., Christmas Day Mass, AA

Friday, Dec. 31

5 p.m., Mary, Mother of God Mass, AA

Saturday, Jan. 1

10 a.m., Mary, Mother of God Mass, EA

Protestant services

Friday, Dec. 24

6 p.m., Christmas Eve Worship, AA

Friday, Dec. 31

10 p.m., Gospel Watch night Worship, AA

Leave Donation

To participate in the Voluntary Leave Program, use forms OPM 630, Application to Become a Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program; OPF 630-A, Request to Donate Annual Leave to Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (within agency); and OPM 630-B, Request to Donate Annual Leave to Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (outside agency). Employees leaving the program should call Ronda McKinney, 410-278-8988, or e-mail rondamckinney@usag.apg.army.mil, to complete a termination form.

Employees eligible for donations in the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

Marian Bellis (fracture of left tibia)

Sarah Blevins

Jeanie Bowman

Michael Cain

Iris Campbell (chemotherapy)

Holly Charsha

Barbara Crossley

Cathryn Cruz (cancer)

Ruth Cunningham

Victoria Cwiertnie (lyme disease)

Jessica Dang

Carl Davis

Shelia Davison (benign paroxysmal positional vertigo)

Geraldine Eaton

David Fletcher

Renee Gaffney

Charles Gambrill

Cynthia Hairston (Surgery)

Beatrice Heilpern

Cynthia Henry (bronchitis with complications)

Melanie A. Hoffman

(parasinusitis, fibromyalgia condition)

Richard Hoffman

Janice Johnson (diabetic neuropathy)

Lydia Langley

Anita Koller

Beverly King (caring for husband)

Danny Kopp (lung-cancer)

Jin Kwon

William B. McLean (kidney failure)

Edward Myers

Tess Ramos (total hip replacement)

Cheryl L. Roark

Matthew Ryan

Leigh Sanders

Barbara Seker

Sheilah Simberg

Marguerite Soper

Alison Tichenor

Linda Tignor

Charles Young (kidney and pancreas transplant)

APG closing announcements

If the installation is closed, is experiencing a delay in opening or if liberal leave is in effect due to weather or other emergency situations, check for postings on the local television and radio stations (listed below), WAPG-TV Channel 3 (on Aberdeen Proving Ground), or call 410-278-SNOW (7669). A recorded telephone message will contain updated information and should begin at about 5 a.m.

Announcements about federal offices in the greater Baltimore metropolitan area do not apply to APG; listen for those that name APG specifically.

For general information, call the APG Public Affairs Office, 410-278-1147.

Station

WAMD

WXCY

WBAL

WIYY

WPOC

WDEL

WSTW

WSBA

WARM

WROZ

WBAL-TV

WMAR-TV

WBFF-TV

WJZ-TV

Frequency

AM 970

FM 103.7

AM 1090

FM 97.9

FM 93.1

AM 1150

FM 93.7

AM 910

FM 103.3

FM 101.3

Channel 11

Channel 2

Channel 45

Channel 13

Location

Aberdeen

Havre de Grace

Baltimore

Baltimore

Baltimore

Wilmington, Del.

Wilmington, Del.

York, Pa.

York, Pa.

Lancaster, Pa.

Baltimore

Baltimore

Baltimore

Baltimore



Morale, Welfare & Recreation

Christmas holiday schedule for MWR activities

Directorate of Community and Family Activities
Community Recreation Division

Activity	Thursday Dec. 23	Friday Dec. 24	Sunday Dec. 26	Monday Dec. 27	Tuesday Dec. 28	Wednesday Dec. 29	Thursday Dec. 30	Friday Dec. 31	Sunday Jan. 2
Arts & Crafts AA	10 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Arts & Crafts EA	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Athletic Center	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Auto Crafts	11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.	Closed	9 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Closed	Closed	11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.	11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.	Closed	9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Bowling Center	11 a.m. to 10 p.m.	11 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Closed	Closed	11 a.m. to 2 p.m.	11 a.m. to 9 p.m.	5 to 9 p.m.	10 p.m. to 1 a.m.	Closed
Equipment Rental Center	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Closed	Closed	10 a.m. to 5 p.m.	10 a.m. to 5 p.m.	10 a.m. to 5 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Closed	Closed
Fitness Center AA	5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Closed	Closed	5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	5:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.	5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Closed	Closed
Hoyle Gym/ Fitness Center	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Ticket and Registration	10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Library AA	11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.	Closed	1 to 5 p.m.	11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.	Closed	11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.	11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.	Closed	1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Library EA	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Recreation Center AA	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Snack Bar	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Recreation Center EA	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Snack Bar	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Ruggles*	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

*In event of inclement weather course will be closed and signs posted.
Note: All MWR activities are closed Christmas and New Year’s Day

Activities

Operating hours

The MWR Registration, Tickets and Leisure Travel Center’s operating hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday thru Friday, and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., the first and third Friday of every month.
If this happens to fall on a training holiday, then, on the Thursday prior, the office will be open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
For more information, call 410-278-4011/4907 or e-mail mwr_registration@usag.apg.army.mil.

New engraver at APG Arts and Craft

A new engraving machine at the Arts and Crafts facility has arrived just in time to create that special holiday gift for family and friends.
The New Hermes Gravograph, with its state-of-the-art font and ornamental capabilities gives customers a wider selection of graphics to choose from when selecting special occasion plaques.
Used mainly for plaques and trophies, one new capability includes the option to space letters randomly instead of

always using straight lines.
A large plaque selection available on site includes a selection of accessories and eight to 10 different metal colors to choose from.
The standard fees for engraving include 10 cents per letter and 15-cents per square inch of metal. Plaques range from \$4 to \$40 and accessories, such as organizational crests, are additional.
The Frame Shop staff uses the computerized "Eclipse" mat cutter, which offers hundreds of options in corner selections, to design the matting for the wide selection of frames available in the shop. There also is a self-help area for those who wish to do it all themselves.
Anyone who has taken the Framing Class can use the area for \$5 a day.
For more information, call 410-278-4207.
MWR Registration specials
MWR Registration and Leisure Travel Center has some gift suggestions for the holidays.
2004 White House Orna-

ments are available for \$15.
2005 Baltimore Entertainment Books are available for \$30. Supplies are limited. The book offers discounts and coupons on dining, movies, hotels, car rentals and much more.
Carnival Cruise Gift Certificates are on sale for a limited time starting at \$450 for two guests. All sales end Dec. 31.
For more information, call MWR Registration and Leisure Travel Center, 410-278-4011/4907.
Bowling specials
Buy 'Save-a-Card' at the APG Bowling Center. A 20-game card only costs \$30. It is valid for bowling Monday thru Friday.
The offer runs thru Dec. 31.
For more information, Call the APG Bowling Center, 410-278-4041.
One in every 10 will win a ham for Christmas. A New Year's Eve Bowling Special begins 10 p.m. and ends 1 a.m. at the APG Bowling Center. Bowl all night for just \$10 per person plus finger foods and party favors. Bowlers must be signed up by Dec. 27.

Active Duty Rent-a-Lane special will be held 1 to 6 p.m., Jan. 8. Cost is \$8 per lane per hour and includes shoes. A lane will only be rented to groups of four or more.
New fitness class begins in January
A new fitness class will start in January, just in time to get in shape after the holidays.
For just \$48, take unlimited classes January thru March. Classes will vary between the Aberdeen and Edgewood areas. Schedules will be posted in each facility and the Athletic centers.
For more information, call the APG Fitness Center, 410-278-9725, Hoyle Gym and Fitness Center, 410-436-7134, or MWR Registration, 410-278-4907.
ERC winter rentals
The Equipment Resource Center Christmas special includes ski and snowboard rentals.
Pick up equipment on Dec. 23 and return by noon, Dec. 27 for a one-day rental fee.
Downhill skis, snowboards, and cross-country ski sets

including boots and poles can be rented through March 31.
Ski equipment rentals range from \$80 to \$125 for season-long rentals. Ski racks and bibs are also available for a \$5 rental fee.
Winter campers should check out the A-frame camper, which comes equipped with a stove and sleeping area. The camper is available to rent for \$35 a night.
Skipper's Point campgrounds in the Edgewood Area offers travel trailer campsites, picnic tables, running water, 15 tent sites, barbeque grills and port-a-pots.
Campfires are allowed on the sites.
For reservations, call 410-278-4124.
Travel trailer campsites are available for \$5 per night.
Tent sites are available for \$3.50 a night.
Sites for Boy Scouts are available for \$15 a night.
Outdoor Recreation's hours of operation are Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and closed on Sunday and federal holidays.
For more information, call 410-278-5789.

Beginner Piano for Adults

Students in this class will be responsible for purchasing the required books for the course as recommended by the instructor. All other materials and supplies including the keyboards will be provided.
Classes will be held 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays, Jan. 6 to Feb. 24, in the AA Recreation Center.
Cost is \$60. Register by Jan. 4.
Sports Injury Prevention
This class is designed to help individuals and teams care for and prevent sports injuries. How to treat fractures, wounds, and soft tissue damage will be covered. Short and long term therapy for minor and major injuries and what to expect during the recovery period will also be addressed.
Classes will be held 6 to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays, Jan. 11 to 25, at the AA Recreation

Center.
Cost is \$25. Register by Jan. 6.
Introduction to Boxing
This MWR Boxing Symposium will introduce the participant to the sport of Olympic Boxing 1 to 5 p.m., Jan. 8, at Russell Gym.
All the necessary steps and procedures to reach the highest echelons of the sport will be covered.
This in-depth clinic will be instructed by experienced boxing officials and coaches who are certified and qualified to prepare each individual fighter to be the best he or she can be.
Cost is \$5 per person. Register by Jan.6.
NFL Pro Bowl Weekend
MWR is hosting a trip to view the NFL Pro Bowl Game Feb. 10 to 14, in Honolulu, Hawaii.
Cost is \$1,099 per person for double occupancy and \$1,399 per person for single occupancy.
The package includes roundtrip airfare through Los Angeles to Honolulu, airport transfers in Honolulu, four-night Waikiki Hotel accommodations, Pearl Harbor and Honolulu City tour, tailgate party on the shores of Pearl Harbor and NFL Pro Bowl Game tickets.
Reservations are limited and full payment is expected at time of reservation.
Reservations must be made by Jan. 3.

Paint your own
Edgewood Area Arts and Crafts now has a "Paint Your Own Ceramic Studio."
The ceramic studio is open to all APG civilians, active duty military, contractors and reservists and their dependents. No previous artist skills are required.
There is a wide assortment of gift and holiday items to choose from.
Hours of operation are 1 to 9 p.m., Thursday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday.
Arts and Crafts is located in building E-4440, next to the Military Police Station.
For more information, call 410-436-2153.

LIBRARY BOOK CORNER

Operating hours of the Aberdeen Area Library, building 3320, are 1 to 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday and 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Edgewood Area Library is open 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Tuesday. For more information, call 410-278-3417.

The following is a list of some new books available at the APG MWR libraries:

- State of Fear** by Michael Crichton
- State of Fear is a superb blend of edge-of-your-seat suspense and thought provoking commentary on how information is manipulated in the modern world.
- Life Expectancy** by Dean Koontz
- The Motive** by John Lescroart
- Loop Group** by Larry McMurtry
- The Hot Flash Club Strikes Again** by Nancy Thayer

The library's Web site, www.apgmwr.com/recreation/libraries.html provides access to the library's online catalog and also has a complete annotated listing of the library's new material, as well as a list of available films on DVD.

See Bowling Scores for week ending Dec. 11 at www.apgnews.apg.army.mil.



Holiday Sale

Through December 24

Ruggles Golf Course Pro Shop
5600 Block

Look for great deals on golf balls, apparel, golf clubs, pull carts, golf bag, and much more!

Gift certificates will also be available.

For more information, contact Ruggles Golf Course
(5600 block; 410-278-4794/9452)



SCHOOL LIAISON/YOUTH EDUCATION

Maryland high school assessments and children
Everything a parent needs to know and wants to know about now and future testing is available at www.MarylandPublicSchools.org. Start early with student planning for high school. Students graduating from high school in or after 2009 have to pass the High School Assessment (HSA) in algebra/data analysis, government, biology, and English.
The APG School Liaison Office, located in building 2752, room 200, 410-278-2857, has a variety of useful parent resources in booklets and

brochures.
Free chess guide available
Pick up a free copy of 'Welcome To The Game of Chess,' one of the best teaching aids available for children and adults who want to learn the game at the APG School Liaison Office.
Volunteer opportunities at Halls Cross Roads Elementary
Nothing is more rewarding than volunteering time to help mentor elementary school age children. Anyone interested in becoming a mentor to help make a big difference in the life of one child, is urged to contact Mamie Tapp, North Area supervisor of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Maryland, 410-

925-4324 or e-mail mtapp@biglittle.org.
It only takes a little time to make a big difference.
Coming in 2005
Instructional classes for youth of all ages in chess, piano on the keyboard, martial arts, teen leadership, Scottish Highland dance, interpretive (signing) dance, driver education, gymnastics, and a whole lot of others are coming to the APG in 2005. A new tutoring and enrichment program for math and language arts improvement for students in grades kindergarten through 8th grade called K12 will be added also.
For more information, call at 410-



ChalleNGe Academy graduates 98

Yvonne Johnson
APG News

The Maryland Army National Guard's Military Youth Corps Free State ChalleNGe Academy closed out another successful cycle with the graduation of 98 cadets from its resident program during commencement exercises at the Post Theater Dec. 11.

The graduates received more than \$24,700 in scholarships and savings bonds. Retired Col. Richard E. Young, the academy's director and Michael Bryant, acting deputy director, hosted the program.

Col. John T. Wright, Aberdeen Proving Ground Garrison and deputy installation commander was among the honored guests who included Col. Edward A. Leacock, assistant adjutant, MDARNG; Col. Camilla Rice, District of Columbia National Guard; retired Brig. Gen. Vernon A. Sevier, former academy director; and representatives of the Jamaican Military Defense Force.

Leacock commended the cadets and their families.

"My thanks to you who took time, love and courage to

stand behind your loved one and make a difference in their life," Leacock said.

Rice extended congratulations on behalf of Maj. Gen. David F. Wherley, commander, Washington, D.C. National Guard.

"I challenge you to continue to take steps in life to reach the goals you've set for yourself," Rice said.

"At this time we will hear from the graduates just what that challenge has meant to them," Bryant said.

Cadets Leilani Hipolito and Sean Oster delivered the graduating class keynote address. Bryant noted that the numerous monetary awards given out during the commencement and during the awards gala Dec. 9 totaled nearly \$25,000.

The top awards were a \$5,000 scholarship to Brandon Mason from Harford Community College and \$2,000 scholarships to cadets Nicholas Williams, Shantae Waters-Woodson, Benjamin Babcock, Ray Roberts, Jeffrey Payne, Jeffrey Turnier and Patrick Barnhart.

The 229th MDARNG Band provided musical selections and singer, Kenny White, of *See CHALLENGE, page 10*

New, extended tax laws bring savings to military families

Sandi Williams
OSJA

The Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 provides great savings to low- to middle-income and military families. The Act extends several provisions that expired at the end of 2003 or were scheduled to expire at the end of 2004.

Some military personnel receiving combat pay may receive larger tax credits because of two law changes.

The new law counts excludable combat pay as income when figuring the Child Tax Credit and gives the family the option of counting or ignoring combat pay as income when figuring the Earned Income Tax Credit.

This could help avoid a situation in which the military pay exclusion leaves the military family with no earned income and thus no credit. For some families, this can spell savings in the thousands of dollars that were not available to them before. Under this option, include either all or none of the combat pay when figuring the EITC - taxpayer cannot choose to count only a part of it. Counting combat pay as earned income when figuring these credits does not change the exclusion of combat pay from taxable income. This option applies for Tax Years 2004 and 2005 only.

The WFTRA extends the Child Tax Credit, providing the maximum credit amount for each qualifying child to remain at \$1,000 through 2010.

These and several other tax law changes have been placed in affect through the WFTRA 2004, allowing families to continue to reap these provisions each year.

For more information about the WFTRA 2004 and other tax related issues, visit the IRS Web site, **www.irs.gov**, or contact the Legal Assistance Office at 410-278-1583.

Preventing cold weather injury

KUSAHC

The cold weather is here. To avoid cold weather injuries, such as frostbite, knowing the hazards is Step 1; Step 2 is taking actions to prevent a cold weather injury.

- Step 1: identify hazards:
- Cold temperatures of 40° F and below.
 - Wet clothes from rain, snow, ice, humidity, or sweat soaked clothing.
 - Wind speed 5mph and higher.
 - Previous cold weather injuries
 - Using tobacco/nicotine or alcohol.
 - Low activity.
 - Skipping meals, poor nutrition.

Step 2. Actions to take to prevent a cold weather injury:

- C keep Clothing Clean**
O avoid Overheating
L wear clothing Loose and Layered
D keep clothing Dry

Skin: Ensure hands, fingers, feet and head are covered and protected. Keep moving, exercise big muscles groups to keep warm. Avoid direct skin contact with snow, fuel or bare metal.

Clothing

Change into dry clothing whenever clothing becomes wet. Change wet or damp socks as soon as possible, use foot powder on feet and in boots. Avoid tight clothes, socks or boots, which can reduce blood flow to arms and legs. Dress in loose layers to prevent overheating. Wear gloves and/or mittens with inserts. Warm hands under clothes if they become numb. Wear proper gloves when handling fuel or bare metal. Cover face and ears with scarf and/or insulated cap with flaps over ears. Warm face and ears by covering them with your hands do not rub.

Nutrition

Eat well-balanced meals and have five to nine (or more) servings of fruits/vegetables every day to keep a healthy immune system. To prevent dehydration drink eight to10 glasses of water a day or more, more when active. Avoid alcohol and tobacco products, which impairs judgment and blood flow.

For more information and/or to schedule a class on preventing cold weather injuries, contact Lt. Ebenezer Ogbonna at Preventive Medicine & Wellness, 410-278-1769/1964.

For more information on other health promotion classes available from community and occupational health for units or family support groups, call 410-278-1964.

APG Soldier receives bronze star

Melissa Bohan
AMC

A research physicist and mechanical engineer with the U.S. Army Research Laboratory for 30 years was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for work he performed while a reservist on active duty with the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program Support Unit at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Lt. Col. William Lawrence was mobilized in January 2003 and was sent to Afghanistan and Uzbekistan a month later to serve as the senior LOGCAP planner. While there from February to August, he served as an interface between the combatant commanders and civilian contractors, developing statements of work and monitoring contractor logistics support.

Lawrence received the award in September 2003 from Lt. Gen. Richard Hack, deputy commander of the U.S. Army Materiel Command.

"We were expecting to go after 9-11 and the start of the War in Iraq," Lawrence said. "I was humbled by the award, but happy to see that the Army recognizes hard work."

Lawrence has more than 30 years of military service. He formerly served as an active enlisted Soldier from 1973 to 1977. Since his redeployment back from theater, Lawrence has assisted in managing, mobilizing, training and deploying the LOGCAP Support Unit Soldiers to Southwest Asia and various other locations.

Currently, he is attached to AMC serving as the deputy commander of the LSU. He will complete his two years of active duty in January 2005 and return to reserve status and his civilian job.

In addition to the Bronze Star, Lawrence received the



Photo by SGT SCOTT MEINHARDT
Lt. Gen. Richard Hack, U.S. Army Materiel Command deputy commanding general, presents Lt. Col. William Lawrence, U.S. Army Research Laboratory, with a Bronze Star for work he performed while in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Medals (Expeditionary and Service) and a Certificate of Appreciation from the AMC commander.

The LSU, an all-reserve unit attached to the U.S. Army Field Support Command, provides contract management and contractor oversight to manage contractor logistics support in contingency operations and in areas of conflict.

High school chemistry students learn about ABCDF

Heather McDowell
ABCDF

How do you find traces of mustard agent so minute that they are the equivalent of one drop in an Olympic-sized swimming pool?

As 20 chemistry students from Chichester High School, near Philadelphia, learned Dec. 16 on a field trip to learn more about the uses of chemistry outside the classroom, this is a problem the Army solves every day at the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility.

"ABCDF's detection devices are so sensitive that we can detect amounts of agent up to the parts per billion," explained Dan Taylor, ABCDF's chief scientist as he showed ABCDF laboratory equipment to the young visitors.

The students spent the morning learning about instruments such as gas chro-

matograph mass spectrometers, which provide the levels of sensitivity needed to protect ABCDF workers, the community, and the environment from the possibility of mustard agent escaping while the containers stored on the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground are drained and their contents neutralized with hot water and sodium hydroxide.

They learned about respirators and other personal protective equipment worn by ABCDF workers. They also learned that the Army needs chemists, especially chemists who take the time and effort to document their findings in well-written reports.

The highlight of their visit was the opportunity to see the 22nd Chemical Battalion mobile laboratory, which has been deployed to Iraq to locate weapons of mass destruction.

The 22nd Chemical Battalion represen-

tative Jim Miller parked the unit outside the ABCDF conference center and showed the students its specialized chromatographic equipment designed to detect chemical agents in air, giving results in as little as 10 minutes.

"The students were thrilled to see how the Army uses chemistry, and they were amazed to see how sensitive the Army's monitoring instruments are," said their teacher, Marie Neeson. "They saw for the first time that the military is a career option for science students," she added.

"We are proud of what we do at ABCDF, and we enjoy explaining our pilot technology to students and their teachers," said Edgewood Chemical Activity and ABCDF Commander, Lt. Col. Gerald Gladney. "We welcome opportunities such as these to teach young people about our mission here at the ABCDF."

APG dining facility is NERO runner-up

Yvonne Johnson
APG News

The Aberdeen Proving Ground dining facility in building 4219 has won runner-up in the large category for the Installation Management Agency's Northeast Region Office's Philip A. Connolly competition. The annual competition involved 36 competitors.

In recognition of the accomplishment, Col. John T. Wright, APG Garrison and deputy installation command-

er, presented awards to Edward Parylo, the installation food program manager, and Ernest Green, Directorate of Installation Operations food service specialist, during a ceremony at the dining facility Dec. 15.

"This is long overdue," Wright told the dining facility staff. "What you do and what the Garrison staff does is probably one of the most important jobs on the installation.

"Without a good, whole-

some meal, Soldiers couldn't complete their day-to-day training," he said. "I'm happy to recognize the individuals who represent the hard work that you do."

Parylo received APG Garrison letters of appreciation from Wright and Bert Scott, DIO director, and Green received a Memorandum of Congratulations from Scott.

Dining Facility Manager Linda Fagans said that the staff members who worked extra hours training and preparing to compete at the

NERO level, "should feel good about themselves."

"We have a real good crew with good attitudes about serving Soldiers," Fagans said. "I'm very proud of all of them."

She thanked First Cook Sebastian Dokes and Shift Leader Chong Caplinger for their leadership and Parylo for his support.

"Everyone was a part of this, including the evening shift, although most of the pressure was on the morning

ACS marks 10th anniversary of AFTB



Story and photo by
Yvonne Johnson
APG News

With the revitalization of the Army Family Team Building program at Aberdeen Proving Ground, the Army Community Service marked the programs' tenth anniversary with a cake-cutting ceremony at the Post Exchange Dec. 16.

Sarah Staats, AFTB coordinator; Celestine Beckett, ACS director; and APG Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Elvis Irby, led the ceremony.

Staats, who came to APG from Fort Polk, La., in November, has been involved with AFTB since 1996. She also is the Army Family Action Plan and Army Volunteer Corps coordinator.

Staats said that the AFTB birthday observance was a good way to increase awareness and encourage interest in AFTB and volunteering.

She, volunteer Sabrina Patterson, and Family Advocacy Program prevention specialist Tamara Johnson provided an information booth for shoppers at the exchange entrance. They gave away pamphlets and fliers while answering questions about AFTB and volunteering.

"The main focus is to encourage interest in AFTB and recruit volunteers as support staff," Staats said, adding that volunteers also can train to be instructors.

The program provides training on the military to Army civilians, spouses, family members and Soldiers. Classes offered at levels I, II and III focus on familiarization with the military lifestyle, communication skills and leadership skills.

Staats said that while most training will be done in building 2754, instructors could also be requested to go on site to teach groups, units or organization.

"The main purpose is to help people understand the military lifestyle and how to access resources," Staats said. "We give them the tools to help themselves."

Currently, AFTB Level I and instructor training classes are scheduled for January and February.

Level I, "Army 101" training on military life, community resources, the chain of command, military acronyms, and more, will be held 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Feb. 16 and 17, in building 2754, room 103.

Instructor training will be held 6 to 9 p.m., Jan. 25 and 27, and Feb. 1 and 3, in building 2754, room 104.

"AFTB was started by volunteers," Staats said. "It's now a fully funded program supported by ACS. That's just one example of how important volunteers are to the Army."

For more information, call Staats at 410-278-2464.

shift," Fagans said. "It speaks well of them to do so well against so many other competitors."

Parylo thanked the staff, Wright and Scott for their support of the food service program.

Green added that his role is to ensure the dining facilities are in compliance with Army regulations and requirements. He assists in the preparation

process by conducting walk-thrus similar to the kind evaluators would do, and advising dining facility managers on the standards and where to focus their efforts.

He said the facility hopes to do even better next year.

"This is good for the facility and for the morale of our Soldiers," Green said. "Next year, we would like to advance to the worldwide level."

'Polar Bear Plunge' in future for AEC commander

Challenge makes holiday donations possible

Robert E. DiMichele
U.S. Army Environmental Center

Did you ever feel like telling your boss to "go jump in a lake"? Well, the employees of the U.S. Army Environmental Center gave a message very much like that to their commander, Col. Tony R. Francis.

Francis took up the challenge of something called the "Polar Bear Plunge" as part of an Environmental Center holiday effort to raise money in support of Edgewood Area military families.

The Polar Bear Plunge is the annual event sponsored by the Maryland State Police and the Maryland Special Olympics. Individuals will brave the mid-winter cold and ice to get wet in the Chesapeake Bay at Sandy Point State Park, Jan. 29.

In the case of the AEC staff, they issued a challenge to their commander. They volunteered to raise more than \$500 for the holidays for each of two military families in need, and they wanted Francis to "take a long walk off a short pier" as a motivator.

Game for supporting the families, Francis agreed to provide his whole-hearted support. However, the AEC staff was more interested in his "whole body" support.

"I went on a vacation to the Caribbean a few months ago and I thought the water there was cold," Francis said with some

slight trepidation. His description of slowly entering the warm blue sea only brought smiles to his staff. The frigid, murky bay will provide a unique experience for him.

"I guess I'll do anything to support Soldiers, and I think it is important to have fun...if not fun for me, then for my staff," he said. "And, I get to ride down to the event in the Ravens Fan Bus. That might help ease the pain."

Matt Andrews, a member of the AEC staff and the Ravens' Hall of Fame 2000 Ultimate Fan, "Fan Man," is a regular participant.

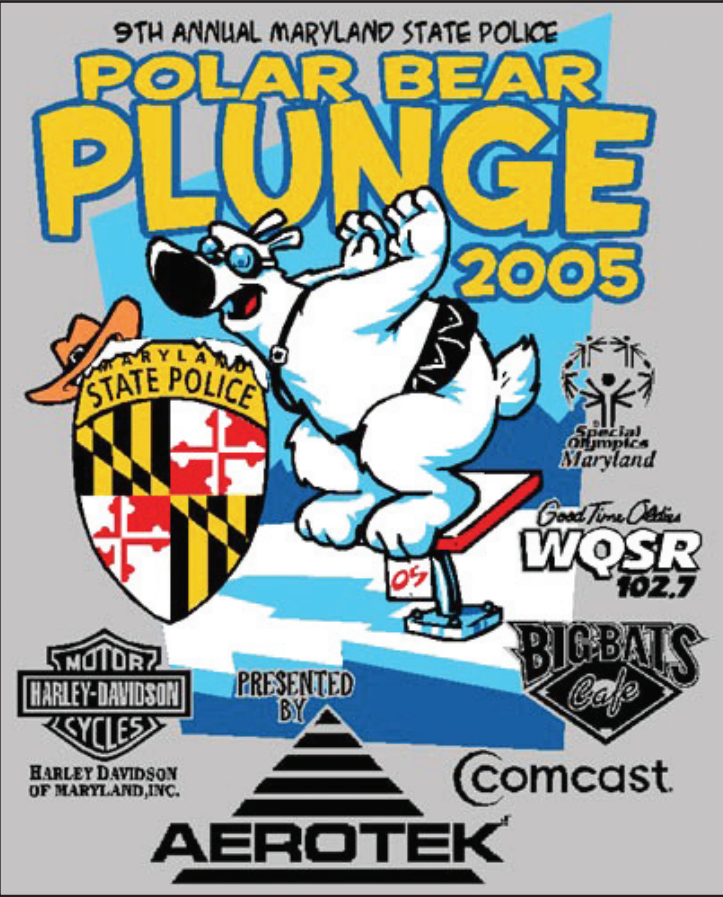
"For the past few years, the "Maniac," the 2003 Ultimate Fan and I have braved the chilly waters of the bay," Andrews said. "That experience lends a whole new perspective to a warm, cozy fireplace. But it is worth the effort when you see the joy and dedication of a Special Olympian."

As word of the challenge spread through AEC, donations rolled in.

Support went to two young enlisted families from the 22nd Chemical Battalion just in time for Christmas.

Participation in the Polar Bear Plunge takes a minimum \$50 donation that benefits the Maryland Special Olympics.

For more information, see Web site, <http://www.somd.org>.



Challenge

From page 7

Baltimore, an accomplished tenor who performs at the graduation ceremonies at no charge, sang the song, "The Impossible Dream," which drew roars of approval and a standing ovation from the audience.

Bryant said that although White's attempt to enroll his son in the program a few years ago did not work out, he has supported the academy ever since.

"He is always well-received

and we appreciate his sharing his talents with us," Bryant said.

He invited listeners to learn more about White at his Web site, www.tenorsensation.com.

The following cadets received awards during the ChalleNGe Awards Gala held at Top of the Bay Dec. 9.

Curtis L. Mickle Jr., National Guard Family Association \$250 scholarship

Patrick A Nedd Jr., Rotary Club of Middle River, \$300 scholarship

Devon A. Sokol, VFW Post 5377, Korean War Veterans

\$100 Savings Bond
Jasmine S. Allen, Outstanding Cadet, writing, \$50 Savings Bond

Heather M. Fowler, Outstanding Cadet, social studies, \$50 Savings Bond

Richard E. Berry, Outstanding Cadet, science, \$50 Savings Bond

Shantae Waters-Woodson, Outstanding Cadet, mathematics, \$50 Savings Bond

Richard A. Figueroa, Outstanding Cadet, computer lab, \$50 Savings Bond

Charles R. Gerety, Baltimore Oriole Advocates, \$50

Savings Bond
Kevin B. Krishna, Baltimore Oriole Advocates, \$50 Savings Bond
Mitchell L. Durkee, Dr. Charles Webb, \$200 Savings Bond

James R. Demeritt, Military Order of Foreign Wars distinguished graduate, \$100 Savings Bond and certificate
Heather M. Fowler, Military Order of Foreign Wars, \$100 Savings Bond

Gregory T. White Jr., Military Order of Foreign Wars, \$100 Savings Bond

Harry A. Crews. Omega Psi

Phi Fraternity, \$50 Savings Bond

Igor Yakiviak, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, \$50 Savings Bond

Jason D. Whitney, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, \$50 Savings Bond

Vernon J. Brown III, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, \$50 Savings Bond

David E. Argueta, The Rivera Family, \$100 Savings Bond

Shontae T. Byrd, Towson United Methodist Church, \$100 Savings Bond

Lillie P. Richardson,

Towson United Methodist Church, \$100 Savings Bond

Patrick A. Nedd Jr., Silver Wings, \$100 Savings Bond

Shantae Waters-Woodson, Silver Wings, \$100 Savings Bond

Tyaisha L. Woodson, Silver Wings, \$75 Savings Bond

Sean P. Oster, Silver Wings, \$75 Savings Bond

Keith A. Lucas, Silver Wings, \$50 Savings Bond

Patricia A. Galler, Silver Wings, \$50 Savings Bond

Paul A. Whitaker, Bob Bell Chevrolet of Bel Air, \$200 Scholarship

Holiday scenes on APG



Holiday wreaths, garland and bows adorn the Maryland 715 Gate at Aberdeen Proving Ground welcoming visitors and employees to embrace the holiday spirit. Credit for the festive decorations at all APG gates goes to Directorate of Installations Operations' employees Carl Wheeler, David Spinnazola, Terry Dennison, Donna Bliche and Shari DeVecchio.

Photo by MEGHAN BOWEN



Photo by YVONNE JOHNSON

Joe Wurm, left, Ordnance Corps Association associate director delivers holiday gifts donated by the association to Spc. Jeffrey Johnson, right, Headquarters Support Troop, his wife, Adoru and daughter, Jordyn.



Photo by YVONNE JOHNSON

Spc. Jeffrey Johnson, right, and his wife Adoru, left, look on as their daughter, Jordyn, reaches for a Teddy Bear, one of many presents received from the Ordnance Corps Association and U.S. Army Material Systems Analysis Activity holiday project for Aberdeen Proving Ground families.



Photo by RIC KOSITZKE

Terence Holmes, 18, of the John Archer School in Bel Air, greets Santa at the APG Bowling Alley Dec. 17. Played by Tim Carroll of Linux Networx, a contractor working at U.S. Army Research laboratory, Santa passed out candy canes and asked each student about his or her holiday wish list.



Photo by YVONNE JOHNSON

Sgt. 1st Class Gary Macki's, 16th Ordnance Battalion, residence Christmas display included an elf and a reindeer following Santa, not pictured, up a ladder to the roof of his garage.

Ordnance Corps Association brightens holidays for APG families

Story and photos by
Yvonne Johnson
APG News

The U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Association brightened the holidays with food and gifts for five Aberdeen Proving Ground families Dec. 21.

Retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 Joe Wurm, a logistics management specialist with the U.S. Army Material Systems Analysis Activity, and associate director of the association, made one of the deliveries to the family of Spc. Jeffrey Johnson, a military police officer assigned to APG Garrison's Headquarters Support Troop.

Wurm said the donation of \$1,000 to be split among five families is only one of several charitable events the association sponsors annually.

"We'll be adding an Army Emergency Relief-style program for needy families of deployed Ordnance Soldiers soon," Wurm said.

AAMSAA employees interview prospective families then provide the names to the association, Wurm said, adding that a gift certificate to the Post

Commissary awaits one family that is away for the holidays.

"The HST and Garrison command group very much appreciates all that AMSAA has done for our Soldiers and their families during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays this year and last year," said HST 1st Sgt. Lonzia Hawkins.

Johnson, his wife Adoru, and 9-month old daughter, Jordyn, received the gifts in the family's Patriot Village home.

"They just brought it over a little while ago," Adoru said about the mountain of presents under her tree. "What a nice thing to do for families," she said. "I really like the idea."



Photo by YVONNE JOHNSON

A giant snowman and reindeer decorate the front of the home of Sgt. Maj. Fred Hurley U.S. Army Ordnance Center and Schools in Bayside Village.



Freshly planted red and white poinsettias and evergreen trees give a festive holiday look to the Ordnance Corps emblem in front of the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Headquarters on Aberdeen Proving Ground.

OC&S and USO unite for Soldier sendoff



Company C, 16th Ordnance Battalion drill sergeant Leon Harrison checks the last group of Ordnance Soldiers to arrive at the airport about 5:30 a.m. Dec. 17.

Yvonne Johnson
APG News

The U.S. Army Ordnance Center and Schools bid farewell to more than 1,000 Soldiers who departed on their holiday Exodus leave at Baltimore-Washington International Airport Dec. 17.

Nineteen buses transported troops from Aberdeen Proving Ground in 15-minute intervals starting about 2:30 a.m. until the last troops arrived at the United Service Organization, USO, International Gateway Lounge at 5:30 a.m.

The OC&S began planning for the mass movement of its troops home for holiday leave in August, according to Sgt. Maj. Michael Striffolino, 61st Ordnance Brigade S-3.

"We will also coordinate their return in early January," Striffolino said.

He remarked that the coordinated efforts of the 16th and 143rd Ordnance Battalion officers and drill sergeants, the brigade S-3 staff, and the USO were crucial to the successful execution of the operation.

"Everyone worked together to make this happen," added Sgt. 1st Class Lester Dowdell, 61st Ordnance Brigade operations NCO. "The primary concern is the safe departure and return of these Soldiers."

The USO went all out to ensure APG's troops received first class care during their stay. Along with the amenities in the lounge that include a luggage storage area, computer station, and television viewing room, the lounge provided complimentary beverages and snacks.

Radio personality Russ Parr from 93.9 FM was on hand to broadcast his morning show which included Soldier interviews, and local Veterans of Foreign Wars volunteers gave each troop a bag of homemade cookies and Military Assistance Communication Kits, or MAC Packs, that included Operation Uplink prepaid telephone calling cards.

"We enjoy supporting our troops and we'll be here most of the day as long as we're needed," said Richard Udoff, the Maryland VFW state chairman from Post 521 in Owings Mills. He thanked the Department of Maryland VFW Ladies Auxiliary president, Brenda Foskey, and her volunteers for their support.

"They all seemed so happy to see us," Foskey said, as she greeted arriving Soldiers. "We are well represented with volunteers from Cambridge, Ellicott City and Baltimore," she added. "Letting our Soldiers know that we are here for them is the most important thing we do."

Topping off the festivities was the arrival of six hostesses from Hooters Airlines, who came to "chat and pose for photos with Soldiers," according to Jim Hampson, Hooters BWI station manager.

Dozens of Soldiers took turns posing with the hostesses as their comrades watched television, read magazines, and found other ways to entertain themselves while waiting for their flights. Most said they were impressed with the arrangements made on their behalf.

"I received a lot of assistance from my cadre," said Pvt. Tabitha Jones, a Company C, 16th Ordnance Battalion Soldier headed home to Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

"My drill sergeants were very helpful," added Pvt. Jake Johnson, a Troy, Ala., native from Company B, 16th as he waited in line for his 10 a.m. flight. "This couldn't have been easier," Johnson said. "They checked and double checked to make sure we had everything we needed."

Pvts. Ruben Fornah, Company C, 16th; Herman Sledge, Company C, 143rd; and Alejandro Farley, Company B, 16th Ordnance Battalion, agreed that while they appreciated the efforts of the USO and VFW volunteers, they were most impressed with the Hooters hostesses.

"I've never seen them before but they look great," Fornah said with a smile.

"We didn't know they would be here," Sledge added. "This makes for a merry Christmas."

"That was cool," Farley said after posing for a photo. "I wasn't expecting this to be so much fun."

Col. Frank Merritt, commander, 61st Ordnance Brigade, thanked the USO for its support, noting that it also hosted 350 Soldiers from Fort Lee, Va., in addition to the OC&S troops.

"Every year they make it happen," Merritt said. "They are supportive as always."

He said that while there were, "no extra safety concerns," force protection remains a primary concern during the movement of such large numbers.

"The entire command is devoted to the safe movement of our Soldiers," Merritt said. "We wish them a happy holiday with their families and look forward to their safe return."



Pvt. John Borske, Company A, 143rd Ordnance Battalion, waits his turn at an airline ticket counter at Baltimore-Washington International Airport on his way home for Exodus leave Dec. 17.



Sgt. 1st Class Jerome Bush, an instructor from Fort Lee, Va., shares a laugh with Santa Claus in the USO International Gateway Lounge.

Photos and illustration by BLAKE VOSHELL



Pvt. Clayton Ervin from Fort Lee, Va., takes a catnap while waiting for a flight home in the USO International Gateway Lounge at BWI Airport.

Pvt. Tim Allen, center, Company C, 143rd Ordnance Battalion, poses in the USO International Gateway Lounge with Hooter Airlines hostesses, from left, Tiffany Hanson, Christina Hoff, Erica Santa Cruz, Jessica Harris, Michele Hanson and Jaime Redding.

